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UNCLASSIFIED  
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Page: 416

UNCLASSIFIED

PTQ8135

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PAGE 01 CARACA 02316 01 OF 02 311439Z  
ACTION ARA-01

INFO	LOG-00	ACDA-08	ACDE-00	ACQ-01	DOEE-00	SRPP-00	DS-00
	UTED-00	H-01	TEDE-00	INR-00	L-01	ADS-00	NSAE-00
	NSCE-00	OMB-01	OPIC-01	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00	P-00
	SP-00	TRSE-00	T-00	PMB-00	DSCC-00	DRL-04	G-00
	NFAT-00	SAS-00	/018W				

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R 311433Z JUL 98  
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1302  
INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA  
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA  
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ  
AMEMBASSY LIMA  
AMEMBASSY QUITO  
USINT HAVANA  
CIA WASHDC  
DIA WASHDC  
SECDEF WASHDC  
USCINCSO MIAMI FL  
USIA WASHDC 1679

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 CARACAS 002316

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: PGOV, PREL, VE  
SUBJECT: HUGO CHAVEZ FORMALLY REGISTERS CANDIDACY

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 02 CARACA 02316 01 OF 02 311439Z  
REF: CARACAS 539

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SUMMARY  
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1. QUOTING JESUS CHRIST, SIMON BOLIVAR, AND PABLO NERUDA, PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE AND FORMER COUP LEADER HUGO CHAVEZ ADDRESSED HIS FAITHFUL IN PLAZA CARACAS AFTER OFFICIALLY REGISTERING HIS CANDIDACY AT THE NATIONAL ELECTORAL COMMISSION (CNE) ON JULY 24. STRIVING TO PROJECT AN IMAGE OF "LOVE AND PEACE" TO COUNTER HIS PERCEIVED AUTHORITARIAN IMAGE, CHAVEZ HELD A ROSE PETAL-LADEN RALLY ATTENDED BY 4,000 ENTHUSIASTIC SUPPORTERS. DURING THE GATHERING, CHAVEZ CHALLENGED HIS OPPONENTS TO UNITE FORCES AGAINST HIM. AFTER THE RALLY, CHAVEZ HELD A BRIEF PRESS

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UNCLASSIFIED

Pag»

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

Page: 417

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CONFERENCE WHERE HE EXPRESSED SOME OF THE POLICIES HE WOULD IMPLEMENT IF ELECTED. END SUMMARY.

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CHAVEZ CALLS FOR RECONSTRUCTION; JUSTIFIES COUP ATTEMPT  
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2. AFTER OFFICIALLY REGISTERING HIS CANDIDACY AT THE CNA, HUGO CHAVEZ ARRIVED AT PLAZA CARACAS WITH HIS WIFE. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, A CROWD OF 4,000 AWAITED CHAVEZ. (NOTE: ON FEBRUARY 4, THE ANNIVERSARY OF HIS COUP ATTEMPT, CHAVEZ COMMANDED A CROWD OF 5,000 TO 6,000 AT THE SAME LOCATION (REFTEL).) PRIOR TO HIS ARRIVAL, REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PARTIES THAT HAVE ENDORSED CHAVEZ PASSED THROUGH THE CROWD DISTRIBUTING ROSES TO ALL THE WOMEN PRESENT. SUPPORTER'S THREW ROSE PETALS ON CHAVEZ'S CAR AS IT APPROACHED THE STAGE. REMINISCENT OF A ROCK CONCERT, WOMEN

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 CARACA 02316 01 OF 02 311439Z  
FAINTED WHEN CHAVEZ APPEARED ON STAGE. FOLLOWING HIS SPEECH, THE CANDIDATE REMOVED HIS RED NECK TIE AND TOSSED IT INTO THE CROWD.

3. IN A CHARISMATIC SPEECH LASTING NO LONGER THAN FIFTEEN MINUTES, CHAVEZ SUGGESTED HE IS THE MESSIAH THAT WILL DELIVER VENEZUELA TO THE PROMISED LAND. ADAPTING A QUOTE FROM ECCLESIASTES, CHAVEZ STATED, "FOR EVERYTHING THERE IS A SEASON. FOR EVERY ACTIVITY UNDER HEAVEN THERE IS A TIME. A TIME TO BE BORN AND A TIME TO DIE. A TIME TO KILL AND A TIME TO HEAL. A TIME TO EMBRACE AND A TIME NOT TO EMBRACE. A TIME TO DESTROY AND A TIME TO BUILD." NEXT, CHAVEZ ASSERTED, "THE TIME FOR LOVE AND PEACE HAS ARRIVED. I AM A SOLDIER, AND I ASK GOD TO GIVE ME THE STRENGTH AND COURAGE TO LIVE UP TO THE MOMENT OF REBIRTH OF THIS COUNTRY THAT HAS BEEN TORN APART BY A DECAYING POLITICAL SYSTEM." FINALLY, LINKING HIMSELF TO VENEZUELA'S HERO, SIMON BOLIVAR, CHAVEZ STATED, "ON THE 215TH BIRTHDAY OF THE LIBERATOR, WE RECALL HIS EXAMPLE, HIS WORDS, AND WE TAKE HIS BANNER IN OUR HANDS. THE TIME HAS COME. THE HOUR HAS COME. IT IS THE TIME FOR REBIRTH. IT IS THE TIME FOR RECONSTRUCTION. IT IS THE TIME FOR UNITY IN AN EMBRACE."

4. REFERRING TO HIS COUP ATTEMPT, CHAVEZ EXPLAINED TO THE CROWD, "I AM SIMPLY A SOLDIER. I HAVE WALKED DOWN THE PATH OF VIOLENCE. I ADMIT BEFORE YOU AND GOD THAT THE COUP WAS NEEDED. I HAD TO USE THE SWORD TO RESCUE OUR DEMOCRACY FROM THOSE WHO TRAMPLE IT." CONFIDENT WITH HIS LEAD IN THE POLLS, CHAVEZ DECLARED THAT THE TRUE BATTLE WOULD ACTUALLY COME AFTER WINNING THE PRESIDENTIAL RACE. CHAVEZ ALSO CHALLENGED HIS OPPONENTS TO UNITE AGAINST HIM IN AN ANTI-CHAVEZ FRONT.

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UNCLASSIFIED

Page»

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED  
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Page: 418

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 04 CARACA 02316 01 OF 02 311439Z  
PRESS CONFERENCE SHEDS LIGHT ON CHAVEZ'S PROGRAM  
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5. AFTER THE RALLY, CHAVEZ HELD A PRESS CONFERENCE TO BRIEFLY  
ANNOUNCE SOME OF THE POLICIES HE WILL PURSUE IF ELECTED. TO  
SECURE RESOURCES FOR HIS "RECONSTRUCTION" PLANS, CHAVEZ PROPOSED:

-- A FOREIGN DEBT MORATORIUM: ONCE AGAIN, CHAVEZ CALLED FOR A  
MORATORIUM ON PAYMENT OF FOREIGN DEBT. INDICATING THAT HE ONLY  
WISHED TO STOP PAYMENT TO ENABLE HIS GOVERNMENT TO DEAL WITH THE  
CURRENT ECONOMIC "CRISIS," CHAVEZ OPINED THAT STOPPING PAYMENT  
WOULD FREE USD 2.5 BILLION IN RESOURCES TO BE BUDGETED FOR  
"RECONSTRUCTION."

-- REDUCING THE STATE OIL COMPANIES INVESTMENT PLAN: WHILE  
CLEARING STATING THAT HE WOULD NOT PRIVATIZE VENEZUELA'S STATE  
OIL COMPANY PDVSA, CHAVEZ DID PROMISE TO REDUCE PDVSA'S INVEST-  
MENT PROGRAM BY FIFTEEN PERCENT. ACCORDING TO CHAVEZ, SINCE  
PDVSA MUST REDUCE ITS OUTPUT, IT CAN ALSO REDUCE ITS EXPENSES AND  
INVESTMENT. CHAVEZ ALSO INDICATED THAT HIS CAMPAIGN WAS STUDYING  
THE POSSIBILITY OF DIVESTING PDVSA OF SOME OF ITS FOREIGN ASSETS  
"SINCE THEY BRING NO REVENUE TO THE NATION."

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UNCLASSIFIED PTQ8138

PAGE 01 CARACA 02316 02 OF 02 311439Z  
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	NSCE-00	OMB-01	OPIC-01	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00	P-00
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	NFAT-00	SAS-00	/018W				

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R 311433Z JUL 98  
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1303  
INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA  
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA  
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ  
AMEMBASSY LIMA  
AMEMBASSY QUITO  
USINT HAVANA

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Pag»

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UNCLASSIFIED  
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Page: 419

CIA WASHDC  
DIA WASHDC  
SECDEF WASHDC  
USCINCSO MIAMI FL  
USIA WASHDC 1680Q

UNCLAS SECTION 02 OF 02 CARACAS 002316

E.O. 12958: N/A  
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UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 02 CARACA 02316 02 OF 02 311439Z  
REF: CARACAS 539

-- GOING AFTER TAX DODGERS: CHAVEZ HOPES TO FIND AN ADDITIONAL  
USD 5 BILLION IN RESOURCES. TO A CHEERING CROWD, CHAVEZ SAID,  
"THOSE WHO DO NOT PAY TAXES WILL BE THROWN IN JAIL SINCE TAX  
FRAUD IS A CRIME."

FINALLY, RESPONDING TO QUESTIONS THAT HE IS TO BE BLAMED FOR THE  
RECENT CREDIT DOWNGRADE BY MOODY'S, CHAVEZ DECLARED, "I AM NOT  
RESPONSIBLE FOR THAT. IT IS THE DECAYING POLITICAL SYSTEM AND  
THE HORRIBLE ECONOMIC MODEL BASED ON THE EXPLOITATION OF OIL THAT  
ACCOUNTS FOR THE DOWNGRADE."

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COMMENT  
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6. JUDGING BY CHAVEZ'S PERFORMANCE AT THE RALLY FOLLOWING THE  
REGISTRATION OF HIS CANDIDACY, HE IS VERY CONFIDENT THAT HE WILL  
CONTINUE TO DOMINATE THE POLLS AND WILL WIN ELECTION. CHAVEZ IS,  
HOWEVER, CONCERNED ENOUGH ABOUT HIS IMAGE TO GO OUT OF HIS WAY TO  
ORGANIZE A "LOVE AND PEACE" RALLY REplete WITH ROSE PETALS.

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